

## Giving – According to God’s Word

11-14-10

**1 Cor. 11:34** – “After I arrive, I will instruct you about the other matters.” (CEV)

Paul is writing about a number of items of instruction for the Church in Corinth. He addresses their limited understanding and the improper functioning of the body regarding the issues of: unity; immorality; their improper celebration of Communion; the misuse of spiritual gifts; the coming resurrection of all believers; and their call to proper stewardship.

Now in this verse, he tells them, he has a lot more to discuss with them, but he will save it until he comes and shares with them face to face.

**1 Thess. 3:10** – “Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.”

Paul is saying that there are truths, which need to be perfected (or added to) in order for the body of Christ to experience the full freedom ordained through Jesus Christ.

To the church of Sardis, Jesus said:

**Rev. 3:2** – “Wake up, Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.”

These scriptures help us realize that none of us have arrived nor have we reached the level of full maturity in Christ, to where we no longer need instruction, correction or challenge from the scriptures. Each of us has areas in our lives needing instruction, correction, and perfecting.

As the Lord of our lives, Jesus starts dealing with the areas of our lives, which are still out from under His authority. His decrees start coming to us dealing with our eating habits, our communication with each other, our study habits, our prayer life, how we discipline ourselves, etc.

Jesus has come to establish His kingdom and extend His rule to the full extent of His dwelling place, which is our spirit, soul, and body. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Every day there is a new area in us that He gets to work in to establish His lordship. As He continues to work in us, and we submit to His Word, we come more and more under His loving rule. Thus, we need to open up and cooperate with the Lord’s invasion. Even in the area of our finances.

Jesus said, “Freely you have received, freely give.” We came into this world with absolutely nothing, therefore, everything we have is something that we have received. We are stewards of those resources that God has given to us and it is vital that we learn how to **steward – God’s Way**.

**Eph. 2:10 - Matt. 5:16** – “We are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” “Therefore, let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

When we talk about money, we’re talking about the “nitty-gritty” of life; we use that terminology because money is so central to our everyday living. Statistics, as well as personal experience, tell

us that the majority of marriages break up over financial conflict rather than for other reasons. So, money plays a very important role in all of our lives.

Some say, “Money corrupts,” but that isn’t true. The truth is that money is amoral. Money is not your problem; a problem arises when our attitude toward it is wrong. People crash when they think money is the source of happiness and fulfillment!

[ **Jack Benny**, was a TV comedian, who had the reputation for being a “tightwad” and he used to do a skit on his television program, which illustrated how money could become more important to a person than anything else. Jack is walking along, when suddenly an armed robber confronts him and orders, “Your money or your life!” There is a long pause, and Jack does nothing. Finally, the robber impatiently asks, “Well?” Jack replies, “Don’t rush me, I’m thinking about it!” ]

What’s the **basis** for the attitude you have toward money? Is it human reason or heavenly wisdom from God’s Word?

## **I. What does our Heavenly Father teach us in His Word about Money?**

### **(1.) It ALL belongs to God!!**

☞ **Psa. 24:1** - “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.”

☞ **Haggai 2:8** - “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of Hosts.”

In other words, God is telling us that ALL money belongs to Him.

Now, because productivity and increase are directly related to diligence and hard work, our tendency is to take complete credit and responsibility for whatever blessing and prosperity comes our way.

We declare, “This is the result of **my** achievement! I’ve gained all this by **my** labors.”

☞ **Daniel 4:28-34** – “But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later, he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. As he looked out across the city, he said, ‘Just look at this great city of Babylon! I, by my own mighty power, have built this beautiful city as my royal residence and as an expression of my royal splendor.’

While he was still speaking these words, a voice called down from heaven, ‘O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.’

That very same hour the prophecy was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles’ feathers and his nails were like birds’ claws.

After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever. His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal.” (NLT)

This is exactly what Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, said before spending 7 years under the judgment of God. This is exactly the attitude which prompted God’s warning to the nation of Israel in **Deut. 8:1-19**.

☞ **Deut. 8:1-19** – “Be careful to obey all the commands I am giving you today. Then you will live and multiply, and you will enter and occupy the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors. Remember how the Lord your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands. Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. For all these forty years your clothes didn’t wear out, and your feet didn’t blister or swell. Think about it: Just as a parent disciplines a child, the Lord your God disciplines you for your own good. So obey the commands of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and fearing him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land of flowing streams and pools of water, with fountains and springs that gush out in the valleys and hills. It is a land of wheat and barley; of grapevines, fig trees, and pomegranates; of olive oil and honey. It is a land where food is plentiful and nothing is lacking. It is a land where iron is as common as stone, and copper is abundant in the hills. When you have eaten your fill, be sure to praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. But that is the time to be careful! Beware that in your plenty you do not forget the Lord your God and disobey his commands, regulations, and decrees that I am giving you today. For when you have become full and prosperous and have built fine homes to live in, and when your flocks and herds have become very large and your silver and gold have multiplied along with everything else, be careful! Do not become proud at that time and forget the Lord your God, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt. Do not forget that he led you through the great and terrifying wilderness with its poisonous snakes and scorpions, where it was so hot and dry. He gave you water from the rock! He fed you with manna in the wilderness, a food unknown to your ancestors. He did this to humble you and test you for your own good. He did all this so you would never say to yourself, ‘I have achieved this wealth with my own strength and energy.’ Remember the Lord your God. He is the one who gives you power to be successful, in order to fulfill the covenant he confirmed to your ancestors with an oath. But I assure you of this: If you ever forget the Lord your God and follow other gods, worshiping and bowing down to them, you will certainly be destroyed. Just as the Lord has destroyed other nations in your path, you also will be destroyed if you refuse to obey the Lord your God.” (NLT)

Deuteronomy chapter 8 is God’s prophetic word to America today. We have arrogantly declared that “the wealth of our nation is something we have gained through our labors” and in judgment, God is outsourcing almost every manufacturing job that actually produces something. We are literally being destroyed under the crushing debt of our own greed.

☞ **1 Cor. 4:7** – The apostle Paul asks the question, “And what do you have that you did not receive?” In other words, **all the money belongs to God**, but He entrusts it to us.

So, how do you regard money? Well, the **wrong way** is to love it.

Let me ask you a question: Do you have any money in your pocket? Who’s is it, really?

Do you ever act as though the money in your pocket is your own? I foolishly have – on many occasions. But the reality is that not only do **you** belong to the Lord, but also **all you have** belongs to the Lord.

**(2.) Our Heavenly Father teaches us that money can be a BLESSING or a CURSE.**

**Malachi 3:8-12** – “Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! But you ask, ‘What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?’ You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so

there will be enough food in my Temple. ‘If you do,’ says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, ‘I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe,’ says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. ‘Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight,’ says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.”  
(NLT)

The key is our attitude toward it.

☞ **1 Timothy 6:10** – “For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.” (NLT)

We have only to look at the Biblical examples of Achan, Balaam, Delilah, Ananias & Sapphira, Judas and Solomon, to see this truth.

- ☞ For the love of money, **Achan** brought defeat to the armies of Israel and death to his family.
- ☞ For the love of money, **Balaam** tried to curse Israel and betrayed them to the Moabites.
- ☞ For the love of money, **Delilah** betrayed Samson to the Philistines and caused the death of thousands.
- ☞ For the love of money, **Ananias** hid his covetousness with a lie causing his and his wife’s death.
- ☞ For the love of money, **Judas** betrayed Jesus to the Jewish Sanhedrin and to death on the cross.
- ☞ For the love of money, **Solomon** forsook the Living God to worship idols.

Solomon was rich beyond belief, but he got trapped in his riches, wanting more and more.

He kept marrying foreign wives to bring in more treasure and the end result, of 700 wives, was that he turned away from the Lord, the very God who had appeared to him twice.

The result? “And the Lord raised up adversaries to Solomon.”

Why do you think we are in Iraq and Afghanistan? God has raised up adversaries against us.

**Mark 4:19** – Describes the plight of the Eternal Word of God that is sown into the heart of a believer who has been deceived by riches. It says, “The worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the Word of God, making it unfruitful.”

The deceitfulness of riches chokes the Word of God, stifling the believer’s fruitfulness. This scripture perfectly describes the backsliding path of King Solomon.

**[I once read about a rich man** with a miserable disposition, who sought the counsel of a rabbi in order to better his life. During the counseling time the rabbi took the rich man by the hand and led him to a window.

“Look out this window and tell me what you see?” asked the rabbi.

“I see people – men, women, and children walking on the street below,” said the rich man.

Again the rabbi took him by the hand and brought him to face a mirror on the wall. “Now, what do you see?” “I see myself,” replied the rich man.

Then the rabbi explained, “Behold, in the window there is glass, and in the mirror there is glass. But the glass of the mirror is plated with a little silver, and no sooner is the silver added to the glass, than you cease to see others, and you see only yourself.” ]

The love of money has a way of obscuring one's vision of eternal values, that's why Paul instructed Timothy to teach and "**command** those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment."

☞ **1 Tim. 6:17-19** – "**Command** them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."

☞ **Matt. 6:21** - "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

If we love money, we won't obey the instruction of Scripture and learn to give God's way. But if we love God, we will learn to give as He instructs us in scripture and then experience the blessing that is a direct result of our obedience.

The New Testament, like the Old Testament, teaches both the **necessity** and the **righteousness** of required giving and freewill giving.

Under the instruction of the law of Moses, it was legalistically demanded, but under grace, it is expected because of the abundance of the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of true believers.

**Romans 8:3-4** – "God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the requirement of the law would be fully accomplished for us who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit." (NLT)

### (3.) **REQUIRED GIVING: The Tithe** = What God requires of us!!

Prior to the Law of Moses, Abraham gave the tithe as a faith response to God. However, in the establishing of Israel as a nation, God instituted the tithe as a means of support for His spiritual purposes in Israel.

☞ **Lev. 27:30-34** - "A tithe of everything" was instituted by God and the emphasis was on quantity. That's one tenth of everything.

The tithe was given to the local storehouse in support of the priesthood. Their full-time responsibilities included ministering to God and to the people; they didn't have the opportunity to earn their own living.

☞ **Luke 18:11; Matt. 23:23** – Many obeyed the letter of the law, but missed the spirit of the law. Tithing the smallest seed, they neglected the weightier matters of the law - justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Jesus added that in fulfilling the weighty matters of the law, they should not neglect the tithe.

☞ **Matt. 22: 15-22** - When questioned as to whether it was right to submit to required giving - Jesus answered **yes!** "Give to Caesar" and "give to God."

(a.) **Rom. 13:1-8** – Required giving to Caesar supports civil authority which protects society as the servant of God.

(b.) **1 Cor. 9:7-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18** – Required giving to God supports those who are preaching the gospel and teaching the Body of Christ to fear the name of the Lord.

☞ **Rom. 8:4** - If we walk in the power and direction of the Holy Spirit we will automatically fulfill the righteous demands of the law - without feeling it is demanded of us.

**(4.) FREEWILL GIVING: Offering** = A thankful, faith response to God.

There are a number of Biblical principles regarding freewill giving in the Old and New Testament. Understanding these principles makes giving an exciting and delightful experience.

☞ **Ex. 35:5, 29; 36:6** – Freewill Giving always extends beyond the immediate need.

☞ **1 Cor. 16:2** – Freewill Giving is to be planned and regular. Paul established guidelines so the money would be ready at the time the need was to be met. We are not to give haphazardly, just whenever we want to give.

☞ **2 Cor. 8:3, 13-14** – Freewill Giving is to be willingly given, according to our ability.

☞ **2 Cor. 8:3, 9** – Freewill Giving is to be generous and sacrificial.

**King David** said, “I will not give to the Lord that which cost me nothing.”

☞ **2 Cor. 8:8, 24** – Freewill Giving is to be an act of love. Zacchaeus gave 50% of all his wealth, plus 4-fold to those he had cheated. And what did Jesus say? “Salvation has come to this house.”

☞ **Rom. 13:10** - Love is the fulfillment of the Law.

☞ **2 Cor. 9:7** – Freewill Giving is to be a cheerful act of faith.

☞ **2 Cor. 9:6, 10-11** – Freewill Giving is to be an investment with God.

☞ **Prov. 3:9-10** – Firstfruit offerings, when an Israelite honored God with the firstfruits of his crop. The beautiful thing was that he had not yet harvested the crop. He was investing with God voluntarily, choosing to live by faith (the promise of God’s blessing)

☞ **Prov. 11:24-25** – Freewill Giving follows the law of sowing and reaping.

☞ **2 Cor. 9:5** – Freewill Giving is **not** to be restricted by covetousness.

☞ **2 Cor. 9:12** – Freewill Giving should go to meet real needs.

☞ **2 Cor. 8:20-21** - Giving should be guided by the understanding of Biblical accountability.

It is not difficult to see that God has called us to be givers. He has instructed us that we must be faithful stewards - responsible in the areas of **required** giving and in **freewill** giving. Just as we are growing in other areas of our spiritual life in God, so we are to grow in a faith response to God with our giving.

I believe that as we seek to diligently apply these principles in our lives and exercise our faith, we will reach new heights in our walk with God and experience His richest blessings for ourselves and for our children.